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REPORTS OF TEN-YEAR SURVEY COMMITTEE

ON THE WORK OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION
FOR THE BLIND

1906--1916



PUBLISHED BY THE
MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING
THE INTERESTS OF THE BLIND

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FOREWORD

THE Association for Promoting the Interests of the Blind takes pleasure in publishing the original reports of the "Ten-Year Survey Committee," invited to inspect and report upon the work of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. Massachusetts has been especially fortunate in securing the interest and coöperation of the six gentlemen who make up this committee. All are acquainted with adult blind problems as well as with those of blind youth. Three are successful blind men and three have had active experience on State Commissions for the Blind.

The Association wishes here to express its appreciation of their generosity and that of the institutions they represent, for their contribution of time and thought to Massachusetts problems in this field.

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HALIFAX SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND
C. F. FRASER, K.B., SUPERINTENDENT

Murdoch Square, Halifax, N. S.,
February 15, 1917.

JAMES P. MUNROE, ESQ.,
Chairman Commission for the Blind,
3 Park Street, Boston, Mass.

DEAR SIR:—

I have now received the reports of all the Members of the Survey Committee appointed to report upon the organization, activities, etc., of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. I presume that pursuant to instructions these reports are now in your hands.

I have carefully studied the papers submitted by the Survey Committee and I am sending you herewith a brief digest of each of these papers, with my comments thereon.

I sincerely trust that the outcome of this inquiry may be of real value to the blind of Massachusetts, and I can assure you that the Members of the Survey Committee individually and collectively have had great pleasure in making the survey for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Yours very truly,

C. F. FRASER,
Per S. F.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

By SIR FREDERICK FRASER, CHAIRMAN

TOPIC NO. 1

“ORGANIZATION.” SURVEY BY O. H. BURRITT, PRINCIPAL,
PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTION FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND,
OVERBROOK, PA.

Mr. Burritt expresses pleasure that with one or two exceptions the activities of the Commission are permissive, not mandatory.

The Commission is required by law to register the names, etc., of all blind persons in Massachusetts. Mr. Burritt, in writing with reference to this registration, says that in the last five years the Commission has annually added five hundred and twenty-five names to its register. This, as I see it, would thus mean a registration in the five years of between 2,600 and 2,700 names. The Commission is to be congratulated upon the completeness of its registration of the blind of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The statistics respecting the blind made available by this registration must prove of the utmost importance to those interested in the welfare of the blind.

Mr. Burritt commends the work of the Commission for the Blind as a bureau of information, and at the same time accentuates the experience of the Commission in aiding home industries for the blind and in carrying on workshops for the employment of the blind, proving conclusively that home industries have so far failed to pay a living wage. It has occurred to me that the aid given to home industries for the blind may have been largely given to women.

Mr. Burritt summarizes his comments on the legislative authority under which the Commission carries on its work in the following paragraph:—

“From all that I could learn in the time at my disposal while in Boston, and from a careful study of the Acts creating the Commission and defining its powers, I conclude that the legislature has clothed the Commission with authority adequate for the accomplishment of the purposes for which it was created.”

Under the heading of “Appropriation,” Mr. Burritt makes an exhaustive comparison of the system adopted by the Commission, *i. e.*, that of providing employment for blind people, with the so-called flat pension system. I entirely agree with Mr. Burritt’s conclusions that an increase of the State appropriation to the Commission for the Blind should be made.

I would always like it clearly understood that in my opinion idleness is in many ways a greater affliction to the blind than is the loss of sight. I firmly believe that the plan adopted by the Commission, if amplified, would result in the employment of all the capable blind people in Massachusetts, and would, moreover, add materially to the happiness of the lives of these citizens of the State.

Mr. Burritt has made an exhaustive investigation as to the personnel of the Commission, the central office staff, salaries of officials, division of labor, relation of the members of the staff to each other and to the Commission. I am heartily in sympathy with his conclusions that no great advantage would result from increasing the membership of the Commission, that the personnel of the Commission is thoroughly representative, that its members are experienced workers for the blind, that the central office staff is well organized, that the salaries paid are reasonable, that the division of labor between the respective officials is just and fair, and that the relations of the members of the staff to each other and to the Commission are most satisfactory.

I would like to add to Mr. Burritt's reference to Miss Wright my own expression of esteem for the admirable work this lady has performed. Miss Wright's zeal on behalf of the blind, her ability, and her wide experience fit her in a marked degree for the responsible position which she now so ably fills, and I trust that the recommendation of Mr. Burritt with respect to the salary of Miss Wright will receive the thoughtful consideration of the Commission for the Blind.

Mr. Burritt is in full accord with the definition of blindness as set forth in the sixth annual report of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Mr. Burritt favors the extension of the scope of work to the Commission for the Blind so as to give relief to all needy blind persons within the State of Massachusetts. This recommendation should receive the earnest consideration of the representatives in the State Legislature of Massachusetts. The State has in the Commission for the Blind all the machinery requisite to investigate the condition of the needy blind, and while the distribution of relief might add to the administrative responsibilities of the Commission, I believe that these responsibilities could be met and discharged more readily, more economically, and more judiciously by the Commission than by any new organization that might be appointed to carry out this work.

In concluding his admirable survey of Topic No. 1, Mr. Burritt commends the Commission, its officials, and the work at present being carried on by the Commission, and closes by expressing the hope that the Legislators of the State of Massachusetts "may be wise enough to grant a generous increase in funds, that the Commission may be given an opportunity to prove the correctness or the incorrectness of its plans to provide relief for the blind in some other manner than by a general pension system."

TOPIC NO. 2

"MATTERS OF RECORD AND REPORT." SURVEY BY J. J. DOW, SUPERINTENDENT, MINNESOTA STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND,
FARIBAULT, MINN.

Dr. Dow found the records of the Commission in excellent shape, and was satisfied that the financial methods and system of bookkeeping adopted by the Commission were excellent.

Dr. Dow makes a gratifying reference to the reports published from time to time by the Commission, and says with regard to the same: "I will say of the published reports which include all important proceedings of the Commission itself and its staff, together with special studies by field agents and other officials, that I consider them on the whole the most important and valuable of any matter concerning the blind presented to the public in printed form."

Dr. Dow was evidently much impressed with the thoroughness with which all records of the Commission were kept, and in closing his report pays a well-deserved tribute to Miss Lucy Wright and her staff.

Dr. Dow concludes his survey as follows: "I am firmly convinced that in the general scope of its work of investigation and record, of industrial and social activity, and of publicity and prevention work, it is hardly likely to be improved upon, and certainly is not surpassed by any similar organization in this country."

TOPIC NO. 3

"THE BLIND IN THE COMMUNITY." SURVEY BY EDWARD M. VANCLEVE,
PRINCIPAL, NEW YORK INSTITUTE FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE
BLIND, NEW YORK CITY, N. Y.

Mr. VanCleve appreciates most fully the action of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind in seeking out blind people through its field workers and the promptness with which such cases are suitably dealt with. He suggests that the home teachers should be utilized in this particular line of work. At the same time he intimates that the teachers are spreading their efforts over too wide an area, and recommends that with additional teachers more intensive work could be made possible and visits to pupils made more frequently.

Mr. VanCleve is enthusiastic in his praise of the efforts made by the Commission to secure opportunities for the blind to work in factories, but points out that the Workmen's Compensation Law has in a measure prevented these efforts being crowned with the success they deserve. He approves of the plan adopted by the Commission for the subsidizing of workmen in their own homes, workshops, greenhouses, etc.

Mr. VanCleve approves of the salesrooms for home products and in the methods adopted by the Commission in this department of their work. There can be no doubt that this activity of the Commission might be largely developed.

Mr. VanCleve strongly advocates the establishment of local centers for the blind and accentuates the advantages of such centers.

Mr. VanCleve concludes his survey in three remarkably effective paragraphs, in which he points out that the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, while serving the blind to the best of its ability, has at the same time served the State most ably "in that the public have been helped to see the problem of the blind as their own problem."

TOPIC NO. 4

"SUBSIDIZED SHOPS." SURVEY BY E. P. MORFORD, SUPERINTENDENT,
BROOKLYN INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR THE BLIND, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

I am entirely in accord with Mr. E. P. Morford's emphatic statement that "blind manual labor due to existing conditions in the industrial world must be subsidized if the intent is to make the individual a self-supporting wage earner." Mr. Morford's friendly criticism of the flat-rate wage and the sliding-scale wage is in my opinion justified, and his suggestion "that a piece-work scale, sufficiently padded to make up for the handicap of blindness, would be much more efficient," is well worthy of consideration.

Mr. Morford accentuates the limitations for industrial training under present conditions and lays stress upon the disadvantages arising from the apprentices being placed in the same workshop with skilled workmen, and suggests that "the establishment of a non-residential trade training shop especially for men would effectively solve this problem." With this view I entirely concur.

Mr. Morford's criticism of a residential center for trade training or employment is justified. My own investigations of such residential workshops in Great Britain have convinced me of their undesirability.

TOPIC NO. 5

"RELATION OF COMMISSION TO OTHER AGENCIES." SURVEY BY
R. B. IRWIN, SUPERVISOR OF CLASSES FOR CONSERVATION
OF EYESIGHT, BOARD OF EDUCATION, CLEVELAND, OHIO

Mr. R. B. Irwin was evidently strongly impressed with the ability of the Commission's agents to enlist the coöperation of other organizations and with its relations with State and private social agencies. He was also deeply impressed with the successful manner in which the work of the

Commission was carried on in coöperation with agencies for the blind, especially with the Massachusetts Association for the Blind. Mr. Irwin clearly points out the advantages which have resulted from the coöperation of the Commission with the management of the Nursery for Blind Babies and other organizations for the blind.

Mr. Irwin clearly states the respective positions taken by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the Blind Welfare Union on the question of pensions, but expresses no opinion as to the relative merits of the proposed legislation suggested by these organizations. In fact, he rather implies that some other form of relief should be devised, as is indicated by the following quotation from his survey: "Until a satisfactory solution of the blind relief problem is put into operation, I see no hope for bringing about more harmonious relations between these two organizations." It seems to me that the attitude of the Commission upon the question of employment and relief is worthy of the support of the blind as well as of all the people of Massachusetts, and I think the Commission's proposal should be well tried out before resorting to more radical methods of assisting the needy blind.

Mr. Irwin pays a well-deserved tribute to the active work of the Commission with respect to the conservation of vision, and makes a practical suggestion with respect to the coöperation of the State Commission for the Blind and the State Board of Education in dealing with public school classes for children with impaired eyesight.

Mr. Irwin's masterly treatment of the question of the augmentation of the wages of the blind and the justification for such augmentation reflects a great deal of credit upon him, and will be read with interest by the friends of the blind far beyond the confines of the State of Massachusetts.

His presentation of the need that exists for some form of relief to many individuals who are blind is strong and vigorous, and will readily be admitted by all who are interested in the welfare of those deprived of sight, but Mr. Irwin is non-committal as to the manner and method by which such relief should be extended to the blind.

I again repeat that in my opinion the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind has taken the right view of this question, and that the General Court of Massachusetts would be well advised if it follow the suggestions made by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Topic No. 1

“ORGANIZATION”

SURVEY BY O. H. BURRITT, *Principal*
Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind,
Overbrook, Pa.

A SURVEY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND FOR THE TEN-YEAR PERIOD, 1907-1917

Topic No. 1. Organization (including legislative authority, appropriation, personnel of board, central office staff, with qualifications, salaries, etc., division of labor, relations to each other and to the Board), outlined with a view to securing your advice as to scope of work of a Commission for the Blind: favorable details of organization, definitions of blindness, etc., further legislation, etc.

I. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

An examination of the law creating the Commission and the amendments thereto indicates that the Act creating it was wisely drawn, in that it allows large latitude of action to the Commission. With but one or two exceptions, the activities of the Commission are permissive, not mandatory.

First. The Commission is authorized (Section 2) “to prepare and maintain a register of the blind in Massachusetts, which shall describe their condition, cause of blindness, and capacity for education and industrial training.”

Data as to the numbers registered in accordance with this provision of the Act are not immediately available for each of the ten years of the Commission's existence. They are, however, available in published form for the past five years: *i. e.*, for the fiscal years ending with November 30, 1911, to 1915, inclusive. These figures show that the Commission has maintained an average registration annually of over 1,500 blind persons, of whom an average of about 525 per annum have been registered for the first time. The record for the last year of the period is 1,872 registered, 561 of them for the first time.

Second. It is provided by Section 3 that “the Commission shall act as a bureau of information and industrial aid, the object of which shall be to aid the blind in finding employment and to develop home industries for them. For this purpose the Commission may furnish materials and tools

to any blind person, and may assist such blind persons as are engaged in home industries in marketing their products."

The sixth annual report states that "the agents of the Commission have had a close acquaintance with more than 3,500 of the 6,000 persons technically blind who are or who have been registered with the Commission. To do this they have made at least 20,000 visits in almost every city and town of the Commonwealth. . . ." As there has been material increase in the appropriation, this work has probably not decreased in amount. Through these visits and the many calls for information at its office, the Commission seems to be fulfilling its function "as a bureau of information."

How is the Commission fulfilling its duty of aiding the blind in finding employment and of developing home industries for them? The summary of its activities for the year ending November 30, 1915, shows that either by the provision of training, regular or temporary employment, shop industry or canvassing, aid has been afforded to 226 individuals, and that home industry has been fostered by loans, equipment, use of canvasser, use of salesroom, etc., in the case of 148 other blind persons. That with all the effort put forth in the fostering of home industries there has resulted the meager return to the workers of less than \$1,600, speaks forcefully of the difficulties that are encountered in efforts to develop home industries. On the other hand, that the 113 employees in the Commission's shops and the thirteen blind or partially blind employees on the staff were paid approximately \$43,500 is the strongest argument for the extension of these opportunities until the State has met the need of every blind person who has the mentality and the physical stamina to profit by them.

Third. By the provisions of Section 4 of the Act, the Commission is authorized "to establish, equip, and maintain one or more schools for industrial training and workshops for the employment of blind persons, to pay to employees suitable wages, and may devise means for the sale and distribution of the products of such schools and workshops." Under the power conferred upon it, the Commission "has established workshops," is apparently paying suitable wages, and has devised means for the sale and distribution of the products. The writer understands that training is provided in many instances for those who afterward become wage earners in the shops.

Fourth. The provisions of Sections 5 and 6, making it possible for the Commission to provide for the temporary support of an individual under training, whether within or without the State, are liberal and apparently adequate. The number thus provided for is restricted somewhat by the funds available for the purpose, but more by the prospects of subsequent remunerative employment.

Fifth. Ample authority, too, has apparently been granted to the Commission by Section 7, in the matter of the appointment of the necessary

officers and agents. The number and their compensation are restricted by that portion of the appropriation that may justly be considered available for this phase of the Commission's activities.

Sixth. It is not strange that the amendments provided by Sections 9 and 10 should have been sought early in the Commission's history. No business can be operated without some capital, and this is preëminently true of a business which is conducted upon so small a margin of profit or, more generally, at a positive loss, as is the case where the artisans are laboring under the handicap imposed by blindness.

Seventh. The writer believes that the transfer by Chapter 201 of the Acts of 1916 of the supervision of the instruction of the adult blind at their homes from the Director of the Perkins Institution to the Commission will result in an increase in efficiency and in a decrease of the *per capita* cost of such instruction. While this instruction is educational work, it is educational work for adults, and as such it is a prerogative of the Commission, and not of a school for the education of the young blind. Under the present plan, better supervision will be possible, and the method in vogue in the assignment of cases will undoubtedly save the time and traveling expenses of the home teachers, while it will insure a more exact definition of the needs of the adult blind of the State.

From all that I could learn in the time at my disposal while in Boston, and from a careful study of the Acts creating the Commission and defining its powers, I conclude that the legislature has clothed the Commission with authority adequate for the accomplishment of the purposes for which it was created.

II. APPROPRIATION

In the nine-year period for which figures are available, the appropriation has been increased from \$40,000 in 1906-1907 to \$68,000 in 1914-1915. This increase of $67\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in the appropriation has made possible an increase of 165 per cent in the number of blind persons reached, of 72 per cent in the number materially benefited, of 66 per cent in the number regularly employed in the Commission's shops, and of 439 per cent in the earnings of the blind people employed in the Commission's shops, salesroom, and staff. Stated another way, in approximate figures, by increasing its appropriation two-thirds, the State has multiplied the number of blind people reached $2\frac{2}{3}$ times, the number materially benefited by $1\frac{3}{4}$, the number regularly employed by $1\frac{2}{3}$, and the earnings of the blind by $5\frac{2}{3}$.

To state that the extent of the work to be undertaken is determined by the amount of the appropriation is axiomatic. With its appropriation of \$67,000 for the year 1914-1915, the Commission gave material assistance to approximately 800 blind persons at a *per capita* expenditure of \$83.75. While some of this number might have received greater financial assist-

ance by a pension system, it is a matter of very grave doubt whether equal benefit could have been conferred upon 800 blind people by the distribution of \$83.75 in cash to each individual. Under a pension system it is not easy to vary the amount of assistance according to the need of the individual. The Ohio plan is the only form of public pension known to the writer that admits of any adjustment of the amount of assistance in accordance with the need and the desert of the individual, a principle which is fundamental in the administration of the pension of the Gardner's Trust Fund in England.

If the cost to the State of a pension system for the blind be compared with that of the various lines of activity of the Commission, it will be wholly in favor of the latter method. The usual amount of annual pension to a blind person in the few states that have provided them is \$150. If each of the 800 blind persons materially benefited last year through the Commission's activities had received an annual pension of \$150, the cost to the State would have been \$120,000. But the moment a pension system is inaugurated by the State, experience proves that the number of blind people applying for aid will increase enormously. The United States census of 1910 gives the number of blind in Ohio as 3,740. With reports missing from nine counties, the records of the County Commissioners in June, 1914, showed 3,578 names on the pension rolls to whom had been paid the sum of \$299,595. It is generally agreed that the United States census figures of 1910 err in returning too small numbers of blind people. One estimate is that Ohio in 1910 had at least 4,500 blind. The same census enumerates 2,046 blind persons in Massachusetts. Increasing this number in the same ratio, Massachusetts would have 2,500 blind. As the proportion of suitable applicants for a pension would be approximately the same in Massachusetts as in Ohio, about 1,920 would have to be provided for, which, at an annual rate of \$150, would require \$288,000, or about $4\frac{1}{4}$ times the amount appropriated in 1914-1915. But the investigations of the Commission lead it to believe that there are in Massachusetts at least 4,000 blind persons, in which case the number of probable pensioners must be increased accordingly. A conservative estimate of the annual cost of a pension system for the blind of Massachusetts is \$400,000, and it might easily reach \$500,000.

But various possible forms of relief are to be considered by another member of the Survey Committee. I have considered it here only in relation to the amount of the appropriation. That some form of relief must be provided for a very considerable number of the mentally deficient, ill, aged, and infirm blind is incontrovertible; but I firmly believe that this relief should be provided through the usual channels of relief after due investigation and recommendation by the Commission through its field workers. Such a plan will save duplication of work, with increased benefit to the blind.

In order to continue its present activities, enlarge its work along the lines suggested elsewhere in this report, and provide relief where necessary, the annual appropriation to the Commission should be increased to at least \$150,000. This amount is easily less than one-half the cost of the initial year of a pension system, and the resulting benefit to the blind will, it is believed, be much greater.

III. PERSONNEL OF THE COMMISSION

Number

A small, active body of workers is the most effective kind of organization; the present number of Commissioners (five) meets well this requirement. The sole reason for any increase in the number is the possible gain in the representation of a somewhat greater diversity of interests. This gain is wholly problematic; it will be considered later in another connection.

Sex

The New York State Commission on the Adult Blind found in 1903 that of the 6,008 persons returned as blind by the census enumerators of 1900, 45 per cent were women; 55 per cent men. As the Commission's activities are concerned with both sexes, it is very appropriate that there should be a representation of both sexes in the membership of the Commission; and as the men probably predominate, the present proportion of two women and three men seems entirely logical.

Points of View Represented

In the matter of adequate representation of divergent points of view, social and economic, the Commission seems well constituted. One of the first essentials in the work of any State Commission is that strict business principles shall be applied. The presence on the Commission of two eminently successful business men should insure this. That these gentlemen give liberally of their time both to attend the meetings of the Commission and, in their capacity as members of the Shop Committee, to consider and pass upon the varied and perplexing problems of shop management that continually arise, does insure the application of business principles just so far as these can be applied in shops where the workers are laboring under so serious a handicap as blindness imposes.

The presence on the Commission of two women, both well known for their humanitarian and philanthropic activities, one of whom has had many years of experience in relief work of all kinds, insures that the purely business point of view shall not be so prominent that the philanthropic and humanitarian aspects of the Commission's activities shall be lost sight of.

That one of these women has been blind for many years assures the Commission that it has at least the point of view of those who have lost sight in adult life.

That the fifth member of the Commission is an educator of the blind whose two years' experience as a teacher in the Royal Normal College for the Blind in London, England, under that eminent teacher of the blind, Sir Francis Campbell, himself blind, has been followed by twenty-six years' experience as the directing head of two of our leading schools for the blind, insures to the Commission constantly the point of view of a leader in the education of the blind in America.

The question may fairly be raised whether one or two additional points of view might be represented on the Commission with advantage to the blind. Would it be helpful if there were added to the Commission a physician, and one blind from birth or early childhood? Unquestionably, it is important that the Commission have the benefit of these two points of view, but it is not absolutely essential that they be represented in the personnel of the Commission. The viewpoint of the former is constantly secured through the close association with such institutions as the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, through constant interviews which the Commission's employees have with oculists who have attended patients during the oncoming of blindness, and through the work on prevention and in behalf of those with defective vision which is a part of the work delegated by law to the Commission. And the point of view of all the blind is unquestionably secured to the Commission through its thirteen blind and partially blind employees and the seven home teachers, four of whom are totally and one partially blind, supplemented by the many shades of opinion expressed by the workers in the Commission's shops and in their own homes. The chief, if not the only reason, then, for adding to the numbers of the Commission is with a view to disarming criticism, which, in the judgment of the writer, would not be effected by the addition of a blind person to the Commission. Such increase is, therefore, not recommended.

Meetings

Regular meetings of the Commission are held every two weeks—a provision which seems to the writer deserving of special commendation, as it insures to the Commissioners a much more intimate knowledge of the many problems with which they must deal. Monthly meetings of organizations, public and private alike, are usually considered quite sufficient and are the customary thing. The State and the blind for whose benefit the Commission exists are to be congratulated upon having a Commission whose members are able and willing to give to their official duties double the time that is usually expected of the members of such bodies.

Inquiry elicited the information that the meetings are regularly attended by a majority of the Commissioners, and that it is rare that the number (three) necessary for a quorum is not present.

IV. CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF

It is extremely difficult for an outsider with but a limited time at his disposal to secure accurate information upon such questions as the qualifications, division of labor, and relation to each other and to the Commission of a staff of workers. The writer spent three entire days and portions of two days of his stay in Boston in the central office and among the staff of that office, conferring with nearly all of them and talking quite at length with several. Quite extended conferences were held with the General Superintendent, the Superintendent of Training and Employment for Men, the Superintendent of Training and Employment for Women, the Field Agent for the Prevention of Blindness, the Field Worker who distributes the case work, the Field Worker on Employment, the Accountant, and with three home teachers. These conferences were wholly informal and quite intimate and sympathetic, with the result that the writer feels that he acquired rather intimate and first-hand knowledge of the staff. The following observations are the result of the information thus gained:

Qualifications

The impression made upon an earnest searcher after the truth concerning the qualifications of the staff is that the Commission has been extremely fortunate in the selection of its force. For several years I have followed with intense interest the work of Miss Wright, and a closer and somewhat critical examination of the organization which she has worked out under the general direction of the Commission intensifies the belief that she is by training and experience peculiarly adapted to the position she holds. I have known, too, for some time Mr. Holmes, Miss Rand, Mr. Greene, Mr. Cole, and Miss Lewis. I have always believed that each of these five workers was peculiarly fitted to his particular task, and the more intimate knowledge gained of their general qualifications only served to strengthen this belief.

I spent several hours looking into the operations of the salesroom, the methods in vogue in helping the blind workers in their homes by furnishing them raw materials, supervising and directing their work and marketing their products, and discovered nothing to criticize unfavorably and no changes in method to suggest. Miss Rand and Miss Cummings seem to be working with intelligence, sympathy, and remarkable devotion upon an exceedingly difficult and discouraging problem. There is great need for opportunities for work for blind people, particularly women, in their homes, but there is scarcely a more difficult problem in the entire range of work for the adult blind.

There is great need of the development throughout the entire country of suitable educational methods and opportunities for pupils with impaired vision. Toward the solution of this important problem the Massachusetts

Commission has already made important contributions, and the work of Mr. Greene for the prevention of blindness and for the education of those with defective sight is well and favorably known.

As the problems involved in the work under the supervision of Mr. Holmes, Mr. Cole, and Miss Lewis belong chiefly to other members of the Survey Committee, I concerned myself with them only as they seemed to be a part of the topic assigned to me.

I spent some little time at Woolson House Shop and took dinner with the workers there. Woolson House and the shop connected with it are expensive to maintain; but every one working for and with blind women realizes how exceedingly difficult it is to find remunerative industries for this needy portion of the blind population. Miss Lewis is working sympathetically, conscientiously, and intelligently at a very difficult problem. I am unable to make any constructive criticism here; I can only commend both the shop management and the service rendered by and through Woolson House. I trust the recent efforts made to extend the service of the House along new lines will prove successful.

My visit to the Cambridge Industries was too hurried to warrant any expression of opinion beyond the statement that I was impressed with the air of industry that obtained in the shops and the apparent spirit of contentment among the workmen. This seemed particularly to be true in the broom and willow departments. I could not avoid contrasting the present condition of these men occupied and contented in their work with their condition under any pension system that could be devised.

I spent from two to three hours with Mr. Holmes, getting his point of view concerning his own work and also with reference to future work for the blind of the State. His direction of the work of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind shops, so far as it can be judged at long range, seems along lines dictated by common sense and reason. I gave considerable thought and attention to a possible larger field of usefulness for Mr. Holmes's powers, being particularly urged to do so by the General Superintendent. Mr. Holmes, too, gave me his fullest confidence and talked frankly and freely. I am unable, however, to make any very helpful recommendations here. The General Superintendent's suggestion that he might be very helpful in the consideration and assignment of cases appealed to me as a possible field for larger service.

Salaries

I have been furnished with duplicate copies of the information concerning each employee of the Commission which the Executive Council Committee on Standardization of Salaries requires each employee, in a "permanent or regularly established position in the State service," to furnish upon suitable blanks known as "Form A." These blanks call for detailed information upon a number of points, among which are the follow-

ing which are germane to the subject of the salaries of the Commission's employees; viz., salary, detailed description of work, time devoted to work, and vacations. A careful study of these blanks fails to reveal any extravagances in salaries paid. On the contrary, a careful reading of the statements of the duties of the employees and their hours of labor conveys the impression that in this matter of salaries the Commission is applying strict business principles.

But I question whether in a few instances salaries should not be increased. *E. g.*, I am surprised to learn that the General Superintendent is not receiving a larger compensation. Considering her training, experience, social, and executive ability, she can easily command a larger salary. A man who would do the work as efficiently as I believe she is doing it would command double the salary.

If the Accountant is doing her work as satisfactorily as appears, her compensation seems rather inadequate. Her position is one of exceptional responsibility and her duties seem arduous. But the business men on the Commission are better judges of this than the writer.

If the work of the Home Teachers is as satisfactory as a superficial examination of it indicates, it would seem that their compensation should be increased. And I make this recommendation all the more emphatic if I am correct in my understanding that they have been receiving these salaries since the teaching of blind adults in their homes was begun fifteen years ago. Would it not be well to adopt the idea of a graduated increase in compensation upon the basis of length of satisfactory service? I have just learned that the New York State Commission has recently determined upon the following schedule of salaries for its home teachers, increases being contingent upon satisfactory service:

First year	\$720.00
Second year	780.00
Third year	840.00
Fourth year	900.00
Fifth year	1,000.00

As Home Teachers are usually granted an additional allowance for guides and for traveling expenses for both themselves and guides, these salaries seem rather excessive. But I believe the principle to be sound. I recommend its adoption to the Commission, the amount and rate of increase to be determined by conditions in the State of Massachusetts.

After all, the matter of compensating its employees can best be determined by those who know conditions more intimately than is possible for an outsider to learn them in five days. These impressions are noted, however, in the performance of my duties as a member of the Survey Committee.

Division of Labor

Impressions gained by my rather intimate association with the central office staff for several days are to the effect that the staff is well organized with a view to preventing overlapping of duties and to securing the best possible results for the blind of the State. I was particularly well impressed with the method of handling the "case work," a method that I heartily commend to workers for the blind elsewhere. While I gave only a superficial examination to the individual card records, because this topic was assigned to another member of the Committee, I believe these records are exceptionally well kept. Records of this kind have little value unless kept strictly up to date; and to keep them up to date requires that a large amount of detailed clerical work be done with accuracy and dispatch. From my own limited experience and observation, I know that only those who have a rather intimate knowledge of systems of record keeping have any conception of the vast amount of labor involved. Herein lies the only reason for my mention of the topic, viz., that while a merely superficial knowledge of the requirements of the central office may lead one to suppose that the staff is larger than it need be, one need not pursue his investigation far to satisfy himself that each member of the staff has his full quota of important work. The farther I pursued my investigations the more fully I became convinced that when the full scope of the Commission's activities was understood, the need for every member of the staff became apparent.

Relations to Each Other and to the Commission

I understand that the division superintendents are appointed and may be removed from office by the Commission, but that they are directly responsible to the General Superintendent. There seems here to be a division of responsibility or accountability that is incompatible with the highest efficiency. Experience has established beyond question the fact that the best results are obtained where the entire responsibility of an organization is placed in the hands of one individual, who is held responsible for results. There is no question in my mind that all the division superintendents should be chosen by the General Superintendent, subject to the approval of the Commission. And in order that there be no possible misunderstanding among the division superintendents or any of the officers of the Commission, this policy should be clearly announced.

In my investigations I learned that there is a slight misunderstanding on the part of one, possibly of two, of the division superintendents on this question of accountability. One expressed the feeling that the General Superintendent has gradually assumed authority which she did not originally have and which, as he understood it, it was not the intention of the Commission that she should possess. So far as I could learn, all the others understood that they were directly responsible to the General Superintendent and the plan was wholly satisfactory.

I realize that the present General Superintendent was not appointed immediately to succeed her predecessor; that the organization continued without change for some time; and that she has gradually acquired substantially all the powers and duties of General Superintendent. Inquiry from members of the Commission, from the one division superintendent most pronounced in his dissatisfaction with the present arrangement, and from the General Superintendent herself, led me to the conclusion that, with these exceptions, there is now a fairly clear understanding that the General Superintendent has entire charge under the Commission of all its activities, and that the division superintendents are responsible to the Commission through the General Superintendent. The requirements by the Executive Council Committee on Standardization of Salaries that in answering the inquiries concerning "each permanent or regularly established position in the State service" each employee of the Commission in his "official record" shall describe his work in detail, indicating as clearly as possible the scope and character of his duties, whether office, traveling, or field work, and whether he supervises or directs the work of other employees, coupled with the discriminating manner in which these records have been "approved" and signed, should, and I believe will, be of distinct value in clarifying this whole matter of the relations of the entire staff to each other and to the Commission.

I would particularly commend the method pursued at the meetings of the Commission, whereby the division superintendents are present while their recommendations are being considered. This plan should result in better acquainting the Commission with the problems these superintendents have to meet and in enabling the Commission to know its employees better, with the resulting ability to judge with greater fairness their qualifications for their positions and the degree of success being attained in their work. If the General Superintendent is always present at these meetings and her opinion is frequently asked, no division superintendent can get the wrong notion of his relation to the General Superintendent and to the Commission.

V. DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

A visit to any one of our residential or day schools for the blind will furnish concrete evidence of the difficulty of formulating a workable definition of blindness. "Border line" cases, whether of sight or mentality, furnish a large proportion of the most difficult problems in all work for the blind. After several years' study of the problem, the oculist at the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, Dr. T. B. Holloway, has determined that as a general rule a boy or girl who possesses only one-tenth or less of normal vision is eligible as a pupil of the school. Substantially the same view has been expressed by the oculists of several other schools for the blind. All information available seems to substantiate

the view that the Commission's statement in their sixth annual report covers the ground admirably, and that it would be difficult to formulate a better statement of the problem.

VI. SCOPE OF WORK OF A COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

The ideal towards which a State Commission for the Blind should aim is the largest possible service to every blind person within the confines of the State. This ideal has been well stated in the Ninth Annual Report of the Commission, under the topic, "Summary of Work of the Past Year." My study of the Commission's activities leads me to believe that the Commission is working towards this goal as rapidly as possible with the funds placed at its disposal.

I have never considered relief work as a province of a Commission for the Blind; but with the apparent tendency toward providing State pensions for the blind population, the question may fairly be raised whether the powers and duties of the Commission may not well be increased to permit the granting of needed relief. Whether this relief should be distributed through the Commission or through the ordinary channels for granting relief is a question upon which there may be an honest difference of opinion; but upon the statement that the Commission has or can secure better than any other organization the facts upon which the need for relief is apparent, there can be only unanimity of opinion. If the Commission is granted the necessary increase in appropriation by slight additions to its corps of field workers, it can easily investigate every case of blindness needing relief. Indeed, the necessary facts with reference to a large number of cases are already within the possession of the Commission. All that is needed is that the State shall empower the Commission to make all the necessary investigations and provide the funds for the additional field workers and for the needed relief. Such a plan will be far more satisfactory and economical than a general pension system.

General Conclusions

During my five days' study of the Commission's activities and of the organization through which it attempts to carry on the work it is authorized to do, I made an honest attempt to discover the strength and the weakness of the organization. I approached the problem in an entirely unprejudiced state of mind, but with a determination to know the truth. In this effort I was afforded every assistance by members of the Commission, by the General Superintendent, the division superintendents, and by every member of the staff who could answer such questions as I raised or supply information I was seeking. There was manifest on the part of every employee an earnest desire to aid me in getting at the truth, and there was a notable absence of any effort to prejudice my opinions in any way.

I have endeavored to set forth my findings as fully and as helpfully as possible and to speak with entire candor. Careful search failed to reveal any serious fundamental defects in the organization or in the methods of the Commission's activities. In general, I have only commendation for the Commission and its employees, and hope that the State legislators may be wise enough to grant a generous increase in funds, that the Commission may be given an opportunity to prove the correctness or the incorrectness of its plans to provide relief for the blind in some other manner than by a general pension system.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) O. H. BURRITT.

February 2, 1917.

Topic No. 2

MATTERS OF RECORD AND REPORT

SURVEY BY J. J. DOW, *Superintendent*
Minnesota State School for the Blind, Faribault, Minn.

MINNESOTA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND
Faribault, Minn.

January 30, 1917.

SIR FREDERICK FRASER,
Superintendent, School for the Blind,
Halifax, N. S.

DEAR SIR:—

Reporting on the subject assigned me with reference to the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, I will say that I spent a week in Boston and vicinity looking over the work of the Commission in all of its phases, in doing which I was given every facility by the officers and staff of the Commission. While my particular subjects were records and reports, I felt that I could not properly cover these subjects unless I had definite knowledge from direct observation of the matters which were the subjects of Record and Report. I went over very thoroughly and carefully the office arrangements and facilities for keeping readily available all information concerning the blind of all ages and conditions in the State, and especially concerning those who have been at any time under consideration for employment or aid in any form.

I also carefully looked over the financial methods and the system of bookkeeping covering all the financial activities of the Commission in all parts of the state, and especially in the adjacent salesroom, the shops in the vicinity of Boston, and the shops in towns in other parts of the State. The details of expenditure for service of all kinds were exhibited in a special tabulation furnished me, and were in accord with the same as they appear on the financial books.

A file of the published reports of the Commission has been in my hands from year to year in my own office, and I have given very careful consideration afresh to the matter they contain, and have made careful comparison of the statements of these reports with the facts and conditions which came under my observation during my visit in Boston.

Speaking in detail of these various phases of the work of the Commission, I will say of the published reports which include all important

proceedings of the Commission itself and its staff, together with special studies by field agents and other officials, that I consider them on the whole the most important and valuable of any matter concerning the blind presented to the public in printed form. The extended discussions from year to year of the methods pursued in Massachusetts and elsewhere for Conservation of Vision in public school work have in particular been of immense value and have widely stimulated thought and action on this important subject. The eminently sane and wholesome discussion of the pension question in the ninth report is another illustration of the great value of the matter of these reports.

It is hardly necessary to add that these reports contain from year to year full and complete accounts of the material and social activities of the Commission in great detail. So far as my observation could extend in the limited time at my disposal, the published statements of these activities were borne out by the facts.

It has been my privilege to visit shops and observe the industrial work of the blind in institutions from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, and I have nowhere seen work handled any better or apparently with greater efficiency than in the Cambridge industries of the Commission. The system and methods of assembling, exhibiting, and selling the industrial products of the blind in their homes also appeared to me eminently practical and successful.

The registry system of the blind of the State was familiar to me as being practically the same as that employed in the State of Minnesota. The double system of alphabetical and regional card indexes and the more elaborate registry sheets with attached records seem to me the best and most readily available of any record system. The perfection with which it was carried out was to me a matter of admiration and envy. In my judgment it can hardly be improved on.

In investigating the system of records, it was possible incidentally to observe the methods of dealing with the different individuals forming the subject of the records to a limited and incidental extent. In these few cases which came under my observation, I was impressed with the thorough nature of the investigations made and with the kindly but apparently just decisions and action in each case. I was convinced from the uniform character of the records examined that they were a fair sample of the whole.

Any organization or system can be largely made or marred by the character of the persons engaged in carrying it out. In this respect, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind seemed to me to be particularly fortunate. The President and two other of the members of the Commission whom I met were evidently deeply impressed with the importance and necessity of the work, and seemed more than ready to give their time and thought without stint toward rendering it efficient and successful.

The exceedingly capable General Superintendent, Miss Lucy Wright, more than met the high opinion I had formed of her from my study of her reports and special papers. Her large grasp of the needs and conditions of the blind and her sane and wise views upon all questions coming within the field of her duties were a revelation and an inspiration. So, too, the office and industrial staff seemed wisely chosen and harmoniously efficient.

It is just possible that one studying the work of the Commission more extendedly and more minutely than I was able to do might suggest modifications in some minor details which would be improvements upon the present methods. Indeed, it is more than probable that those in charge of its operations see more clearly than any one else such possibilities; but I am firmly convinced that in the general scope of its work of investigation and record, of industrial and social activity, and of publicity and prevention work, it is hardly likely to be improved upon, and certainly is not surpassed by any similar organization in this country.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) JAMES J. DOW,
Superintendent.

Topic No. 3

THE BLIND IN THE COMMUNITY

SURVEY BY EDWARD M. VAN CLEVE, *Principal*
New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, New York, N. Y.

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

To this investigator was assigned

TOPIC III—THE BLIND IN THE COMMUNITY.

1. Field Work.—2. Home Teaching.—3. Work in Competition with the Sighted.—4. Home Work. Salesroom.—5. Local Centers.

December 6 to 9, 1916, was the period given to a personal visitation, the time being spent chiefly at the office of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, 3 Park Street, Boston, Mass. The opportunity was taken to visit in another city three blind persons who had come under the instruction of a home teacher.

Every sub-topic was carefully considered. In this report I shall present only a general comment, without attempt to review the work of ten years exhaustively; criticism, if any is worth noting; and a finding.

1. *Field Work.* The method of the Commission in securing information about where blind people are shows how well the forces for human betterment are organized in Massachusetts. Not only the Commission's agents, but also all organizations one can think of, help to bring to the notice of the Commission the occurrence of blindness. One is struck with the promptness of action following information. What this action may be is determined by the requirements of the case. The use of the various means of the Commission for helpfulness is admirably illustrated in the case of Mr. —, teamster, reported blind by the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Hospital, visited in his sister's home where he felt himself a burden, encouraged, given a visit in the family of another blind man wholesomely cheerful and effective, taught by home teachers to use his hands as a workman, located in a shop, now happily employed. This result, told in a sentence, required months of careful and wise management, with many visits by field agents. Not every case turns out favorably, even with patient and painstaking effort, but the impression of the investigator is that no effort is omitted to attain success.

Unfavorable criticism has been heard to the effect that field work so-called—which included investigation of the case and bringing into action appropriate agencies for relief—smacks too strongly of Associated Charities procedure. What such criticism really amounts to it is hard to determine, and without definition its consideration in respect to the work of the Commission is impracticable.

It seemed to this investigator that the field work is done with intelligence, sympathy, and effectiveness. The question of method is important, and some determination must soon be made whether this field work may better be done by the blind home teachers, increasing the number of these so that the addition to their duties will not withdraw them too much from their chief function of teaching, or by continuing the present method. I think the home teacher will be better able to get to the heart of most situations, but there is practically always need for using trained eyesight in making the investigation. Therefore, I should favor enlarging the function of the home teacher sufficiently to let the initial steps toward helping the blind be taken by the home teacher, and when the confidence of the subject is gained, a trained investigator should be called in by the home teacher.

2. Home Teaching has been only lately (since June, 1916) under the Commission's charge. For fifteen years this service to the blind has been rendered through the Perkins Institution, which was at the time of undertaking it the only State agency engaged in work for the blind. No more effective home teaching has been done anywhere, I believe, than in Massachusetts, due to the earnest and intelligent service of the teachers, some of whom have been in the service from 1900. Testimony to the good work of these teachers comes from all sources. In the change of status from employees of the Perkins Institution to service with the Commission, there have arisen questions of importance, some of them having to do wholly with administration or the personal equation, others with matters of principle; with the questions of length of vacation, supervision of the work, increased compensation, etc., the Commission seems to be dealing in a spirit of generosity as well as wisdom. I take up a few questions of principle: Is the field covered? No, or at most inadequately. Teachers seem to be spreading their efforts over too wide an area. More intensive work would seem possible if visits could be made to pupils more frequently, and less time spent in travel. If it be determined that to a home teacher should be assigned more social service along with teaching, then the restriction of field would be practicable, provided the number of teachers could be increased.

At this point it is proper to say that not one of the five teachers but gives more than faithful service, for every one works overtime and wholeheartedly. Already the effort had been made, before the teaching came under the Commission, while these home teachers were still part of

Perkins Institution's organization, to do service to the State in ameliorating the condition of the blind, as well as service to the blind individuals by teaching them. That is, the home teachers had taken upon themselves social service, though they had, strictly speaking, no call to such work.

In any change now, it seems to this investigator that the home teacher should become more of a figure, with added social service responsibilities, directly reporting to the General Superintendent, and supported and assisted in the case work by the field agent and staff. In no other way can coöperation with local agencies be so effectively secured as by making the home teacher a general local representative of all work for the blind, the State's man in the community, adviser and helper to the local organization, as well as the local organization's means of reaching its own blind problem. The home teacher must know how to secure such coöperation and be something of a social worker, interested in prevention of blindness, too—in fact, the Commission's local representative for all its various interests.

It is an opportune moment for a review of the accomplishments of home teaching. To these teachers, as to all teachers, encouragement will come when they learn of the results of their efforts. Pupils receive instruction and then pass out of the teacher's ken. What use has been made of this instruction? How have the blind pupils benefited? A review of this sort is not only desirable but wholly possible with the admirable system of records maintained by the Commission.

3. Work in Competition with the Sighted in factories becomes more and more difficult to secure. That blind workers often do well has been asserted and proved so many times by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind that it is now a truism. But the application of the Workmen's Compensation Law deters employers, and work for the blind in factories is only likely to be a success when the law of supply and demand forces employers to accept handicapped workmen when the unhandicapped are not to be had.

On the other hand, the man or woman in his own home, workshop, greenhouse, or wherever he may labor, may compete successfully with the sighted when subsidized, and this is as wholly desirable a form of subsidy as that of the subsidized shop.

This Commission has tried every conceivable means to secure opportunities for the blind to work in factories, with varying success, of course, but with such pertinacity and enthusiasm, such ingenuity and inventiveness, as to arouse the investigator's admiration.

4. A Salesroom for Home Products has been maintained, furnishing opportunities of employment to some who would probably otherwise be idle. Purchases of material are made and work on the material by blind operatives is paid for at fair rates; some make their own purchases and send their product to the salesroom on consignment. On work ordered

by the Commission, transportation charges to and from the home of the worker are paid by the Commission. The blind worker at home receives the full selling price of an article, less cost of raw material. Consignors ship their consignments to the salesroom at their own expense.

This department is wholly justified, in the opinion of the investigator, though its turnover is small, and a judicious expansion of this business would be advisable.

A suggestion was made in the course of my investigation that purchases of materials to supply to workers in their homes, heretofore and at present made by home teachers as a friendly act on the part of these teachers and not officially a duty, might be made at a saving through a central purchasing agency. On inquiry it appeared that the total purchases in a year are between \$300 and \$400; so small a business would hardly justify the machinery of a central purchasing agency, and the establishment of such an agency is not recommended.

5. Local centers in aid of the blind in a community are desirable coöperating agencies. One such center (at New Bedford) has reported its satisfaction in rendering help to the blind of its neighborhood, and urges the formation of bands of philanthropically inclined persons for similar activity elsewhere. The benefits of such service are for the giver as much as for the recipient.

In conclusion, let me say that two questions immediately project themselves into any consideration of this organization's effectiveness. They are: What have been the results of the Commission's work in benefiting the State? What in serving the blind? I conceive that both the blind and the State are to be considered, not the blind alone.

As respects the blind in the community, the topic under consideration, I have answered these two questions under the several sub-topics, but this general statement may be accepted as the all-inclusive answer: Before all things else, the Commission has offered an improved viewpoint. By this the public have been helped to see the problem of the blind as their own problem. They have been taught to find the blind, to look upon their assistance and encouragement as a local problem; that the blind are not a class to be congregated, not to be shelved and neglected, but to be given a chance. And the blind in the community have been helped to find themselves and their place of greatest usefulness.

Thus, while serving the State as its first duty, but in a vital sense both a warm and wise friend of the blind, the Commission is not primarily a dispenser of relief; rather it is an arm of the State lending needed uplift to the handicapped citizen, helping him to find himself in his community, and, on the other hand, saving to useful citizenship and active employment the person who might otherwise be dependent.

Topic No. 4

SUBSIDIZED SHOPS

SURVEY BY E. P. MORFORD, *Superintendent*
Brooklyn Industrial Home for the Blind, Brooklyn, N. Y.

INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR THE BLIND
512 Gates Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

January, 1917.

SIR FREDERICK FRASER.

DEAR SIR:

In compliance with your request to act as a member of a Commission to make a survey of the work as accomplished by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind during the past ten years, I beg to submit the following report on the subject matter assigned to me.

SUBSIDIZED SHOPS

I have spent several days in Massachusetts and have personally inspected the various shops that are being conducted by the Commission, and have interviewed the members of the shop staff and talked with the blind workers.

The practical systematic handling of the problems by the Commission is highly commendable, and I feel that friendly criticism and helpful suggestions are all that are necessary.

It is a basic fact that blind manual labor due to existing conditions in the industrial world must be subsidized if the intent is to make the individual a self-supporting wage earner.

The problem is, to what extent is it needed to realize the handicap of blindness, and how shall it be administered for the betterment of the individual?

The policy of the Commission is to furnish the raw material, provide the shop, supply the supervision and instruction, market the product, and pay the blind worker the full selling price less the cost of material only. Is this policy sound? Is it good business? Is it elevating the blind worker as a social unit?

The two methods of administering this subsidy adopted by the Commission, namely, a flat-rate wage and a sliding-scale wage, are both commendable, but do their faults outweigh their virtues?

A flat-rate wage discriminates against the rapid worker and places a premium on the slow worker. It reduces the earning capacity of floor space, of machinery, tools, etc.

A sliding-scale wage known as augmentation of wages affords opportunity for both rapid and slow workers to realize to their capacity the result of their labor, but with a decreasing ratio of increase up to a certain amount. The decreasing ratio of increase discriminates against the rapid worker in favor of the slow worker. It pays the worker up to this amount more than the selling price less the cost of material. It is a cumbersome method and entails considerable clerical work.

A simple piece-work scale based on similar scales used by manufacturers of similar products, and sufficiently padded to make up for the handicap of blindness, would be much more efficient. For example, note the Perkins Shop, Boston, Mass., or Industrial Home for the Blind, Brooklyn, N. Y.

The method of handling the products in all the shops cannot be much improved, considering conditions, buildings, locations, etc. The labor-saving machinery and other devices that have been introduced, and the smoothness with which the various operations fit into each other, very materially increase the efficiency by eliminating laborious work and improving the quality of the output; but the quantity of the output is below normal.

The blind workers as a group are contented and in harmony with the administration. They realize the advantages they are receiving and are appreciative, but there is evidence of an undercurrent of restlessness due to outside influences.

The staff is well organized and quite efficient. The spirit of coöperation and harmony is very apparent and, above all, the enthusiasm shown by the staff members makes itself felt at every turn.

The means of industrial training are somewhat limited, due to the fact that the untrained workers must be admitted as apprentices and fitted into the shop system to the best possible advantage of all.

To a limited extent this plan will provide industrial training, but it frequently necessitates the transferring of regular employees from work with which they are familiar to that with which they are not familiar.

Such changes are not relished by the regular worker, and tend to disturb the equilibrium and tranquillity of the shop.

In the shops outside of Boston these conditions do not prevail; at least, not to the same extent, and these shops might be utilized as feeders to the Cambridge Shops.

A non-residential trade training shop especially for men would effectively solve this problem. All applicants for industrial training could be thoroughly tried out and trained accordingly.

Questions of mental and physical ability and of inclination or disinclination to work, etc., could be solved.

A residential center for trade training or employment is not desirable, because it would in due time become a retreat or blind hotel of defective blind. The environment would prove a serious obstacle in the pathway of newly blinded people seeking training or employment.

Conditions of regular employment are good. There seems to be abundant work, and orders are booked far in advance.

All business is dependent on supply and demand, which in turn governs the regularity of employment. In a shop where blind people are employed, conditions are somewhat different. Primarily, the business is not conducted for profit to the employer, but for profit to the blind employee. It is the wages that he earns that keep him from being a public charge; consequently the supply of work must be regular and the demand for the product must be stimulated to keep pace with the supply.

Selling through the medium of the central salesroom is an excellent one, and from the sales that have been made it has proved its practicability as a means for bringing the public and the products of the blind together. Its value is very great.

From the central salesroom a mail order business could be developed that would reach into all parts of the State, and other salesrooms established in different cities. Why not have a blind girl operating a power machine in the central salesroom?

All outside agencies that can be induced to handle the output of the shops should be utilized to their fullest capacity.

The Commission should see to it that all the State and municipal departments use their products. Much could be done toward providing more work for the blind if all the other State institutions and boards which use brooms and mops, which have chairs to be resealed, linen to be hemmed, etc., would avail themselves of the opportunity to employ the blind.

There should be no question concerning blind canvassers or the use of blind canvassers. If the individual is capable of performing the duties involved in any certain occupation, he should be employed. Blindness should be no barrier.

Personal appearance, education, culture, ability to get about, etc., are details; important ones, to be sure, but applicable to the sighted just as much as to the blind.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed) EBEN P. MORFORD.

Topic No. 5

RELATION OF COMMISSION TO
OTHER AGENCIES

SURVEY BY R. B. IRWIN
*Supervisor of Classes for Conservation of Eyesight,
Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio*

January 3, 1917.

SIR FREDERICK FRASER,
Chairman.

DEAR SIR FREDERICK:

I visited the Massachusetts Commission office on Thursday morning, November 23, and left Boston Saturday night, December 2. Practically every minute of this time was spent discussing the work of the Commission with the various members of the staff, interviewing heads of organizations having a practical or logical relationship to the Commission for the Blind, and talking with various representative blind people.

The topic of this survey of the work of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind assigned to me is that having to do with the relationship of the Commission to other social agencies and to organizations of the blind. I was especially asked to consider existing and proposed methods for meeting the need for poor relief to the needy blind. Any one at all familiar with the multiplicity and high degree of specialization of the social agencies of Massachusetts will realize that it would be manifestly impossible in such a short period of time to make anything like a critical study of the entire field in which the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind might conceivably have relations with other social agencies. For this reason, I confined my observations primarily to two lines of endeavor, namely, Prevention of blindness, including conservation of vision; and Relief. These two activities could only be sampled here and there, in order to get the trend of policies and the effectiveness of the efforts put forth.

I wish to express at the outset my appreciation of the absolute frankness and the desire to be of the greatest help in getting at the real situation exhibited by every member of the staff.

COÖPERATION WITH VARIOUS RELIEF AGENCIES

Before one can discuss intelligently the relation of the Massachusetts Commission to other social agencies in the State, he should first get some

statement of the conception of the proper function of the Commission in that community. The activities of a commission for the blind, in whatever State it may be, are, of course, limited by the powers and duties intrusted to it by the legislature by which it was created. A commission, though, which is directed by persons with broad vision and earnest devotion has a certain ideal toward which it is striving. If its legislative authority is not broad enough, then the General Court should be asked to amend the law creating it. So far as I could make out, the function of the Massachusetts Commission is to study the condition and needs of the blind in the State, and to devise ways and means to meet these needs. So far as possible it is the policy of the Commission to utilize existing agencies which may coöperate in the solution of the various problems arising out of blindness. When no agency can be enlisted in the work, or when existing agencies are inadequate to the task, then only will the Commission undertake to create new machinery for dealing with the special problems. I was much impressed with the ability of the Commission's agents to enlist the coöperation of other organizations. The Commission seems to be upon the most cordial relations with other State and private social agencies, and enjoys the respect of the most advanced social workers in the community. The Commission has shown a willingness to do its special task in the light of its relation to a general program which has won for it the most cordial approbation of those striving to coöordinate social effort in the State. This requires patience and forbearance, for there is a danger that an organization working in behalf of a class of people which makes so strong an appeal to public sympathy as do the blind may retard the achievement of certain desired ends by endeavoring to keep step and to work shoulder to shoulder with others in a comprehensive social program. This plan of coöperation, though, wins for the Commission friends who are invaluable in a thorough-going system of case-work.

COÖPERATION WITH AGENCIES FOR THE BLIND

The relation of the Commission for the Blind to special agencies organized in behalf of the blind is very close. The Massachusetts Association for the Blind works in such close harmony with the Commission that it is difficult for an outsider to determine the exact line of demarcation between the activities of the Commission and those of the Association. The mechanical connection between these organizations, brought about by the presence of a member of the Commission upon the Board of the Massachusetts Association, is an illustration of the close coöperation of these two agencies, rather than an explanation of it. The close team-work of these two organizations grows out of a singleness of purpose and the unselfish devotion to the cause of the blind actuating both. The value of a private association for the blind in working out a general State program is so manifest as to make one wonder how other State commissions manage

to operate without such an auxiliary. The convenience of an association of this kind, unlimited by legislative restrictions or considerations of public policy, makes many undertakings in behalf of the blind possible which might otherwise be left unattempted. Possibly the most valuable assistance which this Association renders in the solution of the problem of the blind is its recreational work. Perhaps the blind need recreation quite as much as employment, but public opinion is not yet clear enough upon this point to make it possible for a State agency to give this side of the work its due attention.

In considering the relationship of the Commission to the Nursery for Blind Babies, I feel that it is very wise that the General Superintendent should serve on the advisory board of the Nursery. In few phases of philanthropic work is there more need for wisdom than in the training of little blind children. The presence of a trained social worker on the Board of this Nursery has had, I believe, a very salutary effect upon the management and aims of the Institution. The broad policy of the Nursery in opening its doors to the phlyctenular keratitis cases, brought to the attention of the Commission in its work in conjunction with the hospitals, is most fortunate. This practice goes far toward making the results of the prevention of blindness activity of the Commission permanent, so far as this class of case-work is concerned. I was much interested in the statement of the matron of the Nursery regarding the influence of these little temporary sojourners upon the more permanent population. Entering as they do, they bring with them a little of the outside normal environment. The matron says that she has noted a marked change in the other children since these temporary inmates have been received. The presence of three or four children coming from normal homes has given a spontaneity and leaven to the entire group. The advent of these little convalescents has broken up old habits of speech and little set games, and has introduced a new life, new ideas, and new standards.

The membership of the Director of the Perkins Institution upon the Commission insures coöperation between the Commission and this School. Without knowing the difficulties in the way of such a move, it occurred to me that this connection between the Perkins Institution and the Commission might well be developed in such a way that some of the Perkins plant could be utilized by the Commission during the long summer vacations for the purpose of instructing blind adults. How far this might be carried out, and just how far such coöperation might be practicable, remains with the management of the two organizations to determine.

The relation of the Commission to organizations of the blind seems, with the exception of one organization, to be more cordial than is often found in other States. The one organization to which I refer is the Blind Welfare Union. The difficulty in this particular case grows, in a measure, out of a difference of opinion between the management of the

Commission for the Blind and the leaders of the Welfare Union regarding blind pensions. The leaders of the Union feel convinced that the most satisfactory solution of the problems of the blind is a general flat county pension of \$150 per annum for all blind persons having an income of less than \$300 a year. In the opinion of these persons, this pension should be distributed with the use of as little machinery as possible. The attitude of the Commission upon this question is a desire to make every effort to utilize other existing relief agencies to meet the needs of the indigent blind persons before special machinery and special public relief funds are provided for them. Until a satisfactory solution of the blind relief problem is put into operation, I see no hope for bringing about more harmonious relations between these two organizations.

CONSERVATION OF VISION AND PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

Hospitals and Boards of Health

Prevention of blindness and conservation of vision work conducted by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind is at one with the general policy of the Commission. This has consisted primarily of the collection of data and the distribution of information in every way that the limited funds appropriated for this work will permit. All classes of agencies which obviously should take an interest in the prevention of blindness, and some whose responsibility in this respect is not so obvious, have been urged by the Commission to take all necessary measures to eliminate unnecessary blindness. Hospitals have been urged to develop follow-up work in this direction. By means of periodical inquiries into the thoroughness of this follow-up work, and by stimulating the interest of the medical profession in the local communities in this activity, the Commission has acted as the State-appointed representative of that class of patients with whom the hospitals must concern themselves if insidious eye affections are not to result in complete loss or permanent impairment of vision. The Commission has also stood as the champion of children who have a right to be protected against the ravages of ophthalmia neonatorum, by keeping the medical profession, boards of health, and societies interested in the protection of children awake to the need of a rigid enforcement of laws against eye neglect. Some interesting studies are now being made upon the results of treatment for glaucoma afforded by certain Boston hospitals. This may shed much light upon the comparative efficiency of the general follow-up nurse plan, as contrasted with that of the special eye nurse.

Public Schools

Conservation of the vision of school children has received much attention at the hands of the Commission during the past two or three years.

As a result of studies made in several Massachusetts cities, classes for children with impaired eyesight have been opened in Boston, Cambridge, New Bedford, and Springfield. Similar steps are under contemplation in other cities of the Commonwealth. After the establishment of these classes, no official connection with them is maintained. The nearest approach to this is the regular visits made by a conservation of vision agent of the Commission upon the pupils in one of the Boston classes. By means of these visits, an effort is made to keep the teacher of this class constantly informed as to the eye condition of her charges. As these special conservation of vision classes form but a very minute part of the general school system which maintains them, and as the average public school official knows very little about the problem which these classes are designed to meet, it is to be regretted that there is no scheme by which those in the State most interested and best informed upon this subject can insist upon general principles and standards in their operation. For example, it is to be deplored that, when a city opens classes which depend for their success upon a great deal of individual attention, a minimum enrollment should be fixed which is so large as to make any amount of individual instruction impossible. I should recommend that some plan be worked out by which cities opening such classes may receive a State subsidy similar to that allowed by the States of Wisconsin and Ohio. The State assistance rendered vocational training schools in Massachusetts would, it seems to me, afford a valuable precedent. With such a subsidy, the State could exercise a supervision which would tend to standardize methods and greatly increase the efficiency of such instruction. This supervision should be removed as little as possible from the State scheme of public instruction. It would be most valuable, however, to give the State Commission for the Blind a certain voice in the direction of these classes which form so important a part of the conservation of vision work of the State. It would seem feasible to establish some joint arrangement between the State Commission for the Blind and the State Board of Education which would give to the direction of these classes the wisdom of the former and the prestige of the latter.

PROBLEM OF BLIND RELIEF

At best, most of the work for the adult blind must be of a palliative nature. In the mind of the lay public, and to some extent among workers for the blind, there is a lack of definiteness of purpose in dealing with the problems presented by the blind men and women of the community. To a larger extent than in most social work must the individual be considered case by case, rather than as a member of a class. Some one has said that there is no problem of the blind. Each individual blind person is a problem in himself. However true this may be, there are a few rather clearly defined fundamental principles. The needs of those who come to the

attention of an organization such as the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind are for the most part education, employment, recreation, or relief.

Any general work for the blind attempts, in a measure, to satisfy these four demands which stand in the way of self-expression. Sometimes these needs have been of so long standing that even the desire for self-expression has largely subsided. Then must the worker for the blind endeavor to stimulate and direct this desire. For the most part, however, one should endeavor to meet these needs and then step aside, so as not to interfere with freedom of expression.

Workshops and Augmentation of Wages

The workshops of the Commission were organized with two fundamental aims. The major consideration is that of employment; the minor object is to pay wages. It is the combination of these two aims, with the emphasis upon the element of employment, which justifies the expenditure of upwards of a dollar or more to pay the blind employee a dollar. The industry has not yet been discovered which can be operated with an unselected group of blind employees in such a way as to pay from the profits a wage which will enable the less efficient members of the force to support themselves. Many employed blind persons, therefore, are still subjects for relief. It is the policy of some workshops, if not practically all of them, to pay larger wages than is justified by the profits on the enterprise. Up to a certain point this wage in excess of profits is the justifiable cost of meeting the need of employment. There is no agreement among workers for the blind as to just what relation this cost of providing employment should bear to the profit on the industry from which the true wages are paid. This is determined in each shop, either by the limit of the resources available or upon the grounds of policy.

I was not able to ascertain that the Commission had any uniform policy in this connection which might be said to apply to all of the industrial departments. The shops outside of Cambridge have worked out an ingenious system of augmenting the wages of the less efficient blind persons in a way well calculated to bring the workmen's income more nearly to a point upon which he can exist without discouraging the more efficient and more energetic operatives. This augmentation of wages may or may not be considered relief. It depends upon its object. If the object is simply to give the blind man funds sufficient to enable him to live without depending upon others, then it is relief. But if the object is to encourage him to greater efforts, especially while he is attaining greater skill, then it should be regarded as the cost of training or the cost of employment. If the latter view be taken, the system of augmenting wages should be continued in some form until his wage reaches a point upon which he can maintain a more decent subsistence. If this be considered the cost of training, it

should be continued only so long as the apprentice shows progress. If the management considers this augmentation a relief, it should be carefully separated from wages in the minds of the employees. Without attaching a stigma to its reception, there should be stimulated an earnest desire among the workmen receiving it to reach the point where his wages will no longer need this augmentation.

Payment of Board of Apprentices

Another form in which the Commission dispenses money for the direct assistance of individual blind persons is the payment of board of apprentices. At first thought, this might seem to be relief. But since this policy was adopted in lieu of a residential trade school for adults, I think that it should be charged to educational activity.

Industrial Aid Fund and Homes for the Blind

Two forms of relief have been considered by the Commission—first, the Occupational Colony, and second, the Industrial Aid Fund. That which has attracted the most local attention in Massachusetts is the Occupational Colony—in its later form, the Industrial Home. Many blind people of the state have condemned this as a “blind man’s poorhouse.” In spite of all the efforts which might be made to keep this institution from assuming the tone of an almshouse, I feel confident that a weak administration would sooner or later come which would justify the appellation of its opponents. An institution which endeavors to be a temporary abode for men learning a trade, and at the same time a permanent residence for workmen unfit for one reason or another to hold their own in the community, must be confronted with innumerable problems. I am convinced that the only way to operate successfully such an undertaking would be to separate carefully, both in place and management, the industrial school from the permanent home. Otherwise, there will be constant dissatisfaction on the part of certain apprentices who are forced to resume life in a normal community, while those compelled by circumstances to remain at the home will complain bitterly at not being given another chance in the day shops. The question whether or not Massachusetts is in need of an industrial training school with boarding facilities in connection is a question which does not fall within the purview of my examination. As to the need of an employment home for the blind, I must confess that I was not convinced by the agents of the Commission that the peculiar character of the blind population of Massachusetts justifies one in disregarding the general considerations against such an establishment. Any plan for the segregation of persons, on the basis of a common infirmity removing them from intercourse with ordinary society, is out of keeping with twentieth century social work. Workers for the blind in Massachusetts during the past three-fourths of a century have done more than any

others to persuade the world that a permanent employment home for the blind is unwise and unnatural. Any step toward the creation of such a home in the face of the Massachusetts tradition upon this subject should be most carefully weighed before it is entered upon.

Industrial Aid Fund

There remains one more form in which it has been proposed that the Commission dispense funds directly to blind persons. This is the Industrial Aid Fund. This comes as near the payment of actual relief money as, in my opinion, the Commission should approach. If wisely and fearlessly administered, it will enable the Commission to assist a group of blind members of the community in a truly constructive way. This aid may sometimes be actual relief. In other cases it may be cost of employment; in still other cases it may be in a sense chargeable to educational work. So far as it is actual relief, the Commission should make its payment a temporary arrangement until some other agency can be found which will take over this expense under the supervision of the Commission. In cases where it is the cost of employment, it is quite as legitimate a permanent undertaking as the operation of the workshop.

Aid from Relief Agencies

For more than a quarter of a century the blind people of Massachusetts have urged the General Court from time to time to grant a "pension" to the needy blind residents of the Commonwealth. This claim is based upon the conviction that there is a large amount of poverty which may be traced directly to the handicap of blindness. Since this poverty resulting directly from blindness is due to no fault of the individual himself, the blind people feel that it should be relieved in some direct way which will carry with it no social stigma. Furthermore, it should be associated with none of the indignity which so frequently accompanies a searching social investigation. Not being social workers, and not being trained in the modern principles of organized philanthropy, an easily obtained flat rate "pension" to all needy blind persons seems to them the simplest and most effective solution of the situation. It is admitted by the advocates of the "pension" that it may result in a certain amount of fraud. But the sums of money received by fraudulent means, it is contended, will not be likely to exceed the cost of a thoroughgoing system of investigation. It is further contended that the unsophisticated needy blind persons are no more likely to make incorrect statements of their condition than are the "high-salaried" investigators who feel that it is incumbent upon them to make findings which will justify their employment.

The granting of relief by modern organizations is an effort to relieve poverty not on the basis of pity, but on the basis of justice. If this be true, it is a reflection on the efficiency of this machinery that there should be

connected with the reception of such relief a stigma which tends to degrade the individual who is so placed that he must continue to receive the alms and bear the disgrace. Perhaps nowhere in the country is the reluctance to become a "pauper" stronger than in New England. This, of course, has its beneficial effects in restraining persons who might otherwise endeavor to impose upon charitable agencies, but there can be no question that it works a hardship upon certain persons, some of whom are without sight, who are compelled to sell their respect in this connection in order to obtain the necessities of life. It is the half-conscious conviction of the public of the injustice of this situation which made the authors of the Mothers' Aid Law declare the recipients not to be "paupers," while at the same time prohibiting such mothers from obtaining settlement in any town while receiving this public aid. This is why we have "pensions for the blind" instead of "blind relief." It is an effort to attach to the reception of blind relief that sense of just due which has grown up in the public mind around the soldier's pension. This, however, is a subterfuge which carries with it dangers of a fundamental nature. It is an effort to relieve certain classes from the effect of a certain error in the administration of charity without attacking the error.

Whether or not Massachusetts is in need of a special blind relief law is a question upon which I, in my short visit, was not able entirely to satisfy myself. I feel certain that unless those most competent to solve these problems work out some general plan for the relief of the needy blind in a way carrying with it no stigma, the lay friends of the blind are going to take matters into their own hands. Special "blind pensions" and "blind relief laws" seem to be the order of the day throughout the country. They have been hastily drawn by persons who have made no thoroughgoing investigation into the operation of similar laws in other States. Blindness makes its own strong appeal, and, if I mistake not, the people of Massachusetts, in the long run, are not unlike those in our States farther West.

An effort is being made by the Massachusetts Commission to get at the real facts regarding the granting of relief to blind persons by the various towns of the State. The information available at the time of my visit indicated that in a few districts overseers of the poor had taken into account the special needs of the blind in fixing the amount of relief granted, but in most cases the sums allowed to the blind applicants are the conventional amount doled out to paupers of the community.

It cannot be denied that the handicap of blindness forces the most efficient sightless person down far nearer the poverty border line than he would otherwise be. Consider, for example, the case of a man with a modicum of vision, which enables him to take his place in the community in some inferior position. He may have intelligence and energy slightly superior to his associates, and by the exercise of ingenuity and unflagging industry is able to earn a wage amounting to possibly two-thirds of what

the average man with sight would be able to command. The limitation in his wage means self-denial amounting in many cases to inadequate food, clothing, and medical attention. He cannot select occupations which will be healthful, and must many times work under unsanitary conditions. He cannot save against the "rainy days" which are bound to come to him sooner than to other men. The first sign of breaking throws him upon the public. Such a man should not be forced into an almshouse, nor should he be compelled to submit to the disgrace usually associated with town relief.

Again, take the case of an old woman who has lost her sight in later life. She goes to the home of the relative upon whom she has the greatest legal and moral claim. If she could see, she would do many little things about the house that would go far toward making her welcome there. As she is blind, though—and blind after the age of ready adaptation—she is not a help in any way, but a great care to the family. In appealing for relief to the overseers, it would appear from the Commission's investigations that she is usually treated upon exactly the same basis as is an elderly woman with sight.

Again, take the case of a young woman who has attended a school for the blind, or who has had a good education before losing her sight, with all the refining influence and raised standards of living which go with such an early training. It is obvious that a larger percentage of such women are likely to become more or less charges upon the public than those enjoying eyesight. Her high standard of living resulting from her early education makes her feel the sting of poverty much more keenly than does the typical recipient of relief. Those best acquainted with the blind realize that the poverty line for her is much higher up in the scale of weekly income than for those who have not had her early advantages.

These are but three typical cases. One could multiply them indefinitely. The fact is, in my judgment, that blindness should be taken into consideration as a large contributing factor in making persons fit subjects for outdoor relief. The flat pension without investigation, without adjustment to other incomes, and without corresponding demand for some sort of return from the individual, is not the true solution. Blindness in itself seldom carries with it any claim upon the public, but blindness in itself does tend to convert otherwise self-supporting persons into dependents. It is not fair to the blind, whose road is already hard enough, to subject them either to the pangs of keen want because their special need is not realized; nor is it fair to subject them to the stigma accompanying the reception of outdoor relief when they are forced to this situation by no fault of their own. Blindness makes a stronger appeal to public sympathy than does almost any other handicap. Let us not delay special provision for this class simply because other handicapped persons should be included in the social program of which special blind relief is a part. Those most enlightened concerning the problems of the blind, and those upon whose interest the

blind have the greatest claim, should endeavor rather to blaze the way for handicapped classes. If, in so doing, we can formulate a plan for special aid that will dovetail into any general social program to be completed later, then so much the better.

My study of the Massachusetts situation convinced me that there were two steps which may be taken for adequately meeting the needs of the blind for relief. Perhaps the wiser plan will be to try to take one step and, should it prove inadequate, then to try the other. The first step, it seems to me, is one which the Commission can properly take without disrupting its machinery. This is the appointment of agents to act as special advocates of the blind wherever persons without sight are making a just appeal to the overseers for relief. It may be that these special advocates will in time be able to so educate the overseers and the public that justice will be done to the blind without a special relief law. This must, of course, take years to accomplish, and the patience of the blind and their friends will be tried many times before anything approaching a satisfactory condition will be obtained. Should this prove inadequate or impracticable, a special blind relief law in some form is bound to come. In formulating such a law, it appears to me that there is a valuable suggestion contained in the Mothers' Aid Law. In brief, the Mothers' Aid Law authorizes boards of overseers of towns to provide adequate relief to needy mothers of dependent children. One-third of the money thus paid is refunded to the town by the State on condition that the overseers administer the relief in a way approved by the State Board of Charities. In this way the Board of Charities is able to supervise and standardize the administration of this aid.

I would suggest that some such plan be followed in respect to the blind. The supervision, however, should be shared jointly by the Commission for the Blind and the State Board of Charities. The State Board of Charities should have the bulk of the responsibility. This would insure an administration of the blind relief in accordance with approved principles of granting relief laid down by the State Board of Charities, and at the same time the Commission for the Blind could see to it that the peculiar angle growing out of blindness is not disregarded.

One of the grounds of dissatisfaction with the State Commission for the Blind voiced by the Welfare Union is the lack of a representative blind person upon this Board. The contention is that some blind person who is making a success in life under the handicap of blindness should be appointed. Such a person, they feel, would be, in a sense, their special representative, to whom they could appeal with a confidence of sympathy and comprehension.

This criticism contains a certain element of truth. Should the Governor at some future time see fit to comply with this demand, much care should be exercised in the selection of the blind person. Without the presence on the Board of a representative blind man who has won his way in spite of

his handicap, every member of the Commission feels it incumbent upon him to strive to see for himself the blind man's point of view. With such a practical blind person upon the Board, the other members will be likely to shift upon him the responsibility for calling to their attention the special viewpoint of the blind. Should this "practical blind man" be incapable of properly presenting this aspect at all times, the net result might be greater neglect of the special wishes of the blind than grows out of the present composition of the Board.

There is one way in which the Commission might come closer to some of the blind people than it now does. In a large measure the public knowledge of the Commission for the Blind throughout the Commonwealth emanates from the blind people themselves. An effort should, therefore, be made to inform this group of people in some definite way as to just what the Commission is doing. A special Braille edition of an annual report not exceeding 10,000 words might be sent to a few hundred sightless readers. This would involve an initial expenditure of twenty or thirty dollars for plates, and perhaps fifty cents a copy for the report.

Respectfully submitted,

R. B. IRWIN.

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